



United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria, Public Affairs Section
Plot 1075, Diplomatic Drive, Central Business District, Abuja
Telephone: 09-461-4000. Website at <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Africa Command leadership visits Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria--U.S. Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander, U.S. Africa Command, wrapped up a three-day West African visit Feb. 22-25 with a stop in Nigeria yesterday to meet with the nation's leaders and further the long-standing partnership and security cooperation between the two nations.

During the visit, Townsend met with the Nigerian President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, and National Security Adviser, Babagan Monguno, to discuss regional security issues and to express the command's gratitude for the assistance provided during a hostage rescue operation last year.

"When we asked for their help, the Nigerian government answered the call. Our hostage recovery mission in October would have been impossible without their support," said Townsend. "They quickly provided assistance that helped the U.S. military to save an American life. That is a strong example of our partnership with Nigeria."

Townsend also met with senior military officials, including Minister of Defence Bashir Salihi Magash and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Leo Irabor, to talk about on-going cooperation in the region and greater maritime security and threat mitigation. Nigeria is a key partner in countering violent extremist organizations throughout the Lake Chad Basin.

"The bilateral relationship between Nigeria and the U.S. is built on several pillars including security cooperation," Townsend said. "U.S. Africa Command will do our part to advance the security cooperation pillar, so that Nigerians can enjoy the more secure future they all deserve."

As close partners, the U.S. and Nigeria have worked at ensuring the collaborative relationship continues to grow to include a commitment to interoperability. Nigeria

purchased 12 A-29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft, which will be delivered later this year.

"Nigeria's purchase of A-29 Super Tucano aircraft is another example of their commitment to interoperability and security in the region," said Townsend. "Our economic relationship with Nigeria is already strong, and we look forward to the continued strengthening of security relationships. Nigeria's leaders understand the importance of a collaborative approach to ensuring stability in West Africa and partnering on areas of mutual interest."

The commander also met with the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Mary Beth Leonard. "General Townsend's visit to Nigeria demonstrates the strategic importance the United States places on our bilateral relationship with Nigeria," Leonard said. "Our security cooperation partnership with Nigeria's military will strengthen the country's capabilities to secure land and sea borders, enhance overall security, and combat terrorism in the North East."

As part of the visit, Townsend participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Nigeria Military National Cemetery to honor those who have given their lives in the service of their nation. During the visit, the delegation expressed their condolences for the seven service members killed in the crash of a Nigerian Air Force aircraft in Abuja earlier this week.

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Read more about General Townsend's West African visit here: [AFRICOM commander visit to Ghana highlights U.S. support for joint security cooperation](#)

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